

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6309

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL QUEBEC

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TAGS: ELAB, PINT, CA

SUBJ: REACTIONS TO CLICHE COMMISSION REPORT

REF:QUEBEC 0105; MONTREAL 0845

1. ON MAY 9, THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT MOVED TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CLICHE COMMISSION BY INTRODUCING TWO BILLS, ONE IMPOSING TRUSTEESHIP ON FOUR CONSTRUCTION UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE QUEBEC FEDERATION OF LABOR (QFL) AND ANOTHER BARRING PERSONS WITH SERIOUS CRIMINAL RECORDS FROM SENIOR UNION POSTS. ON MAY 13, THE QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTED EMERGENCY MEASURES GIVING TOP PRIORITY TO DEBATE ON THESE TWO BILLS. THE PARTI QUEBECOIS, QUEBEC'S OFFICIAL OPPOSITION PARTY, HAS SAID IT WILL OPPOSE THE TRUSTEESHIP MEASURE. THE CREDITISTE DEPUTIES AND THE SOLE NATIONAL UNION DEPUTY HAVE ALSO CRITICIZED THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

2. THE QUEBEC FEDERATION OF LABOR HAS REACTED STRONGLY. IT HAS REQUESTED A 90-DAY MORATORIUM ON THE LEGISLATION TO GIVE IT TIME TO PUT ITS OWN HOUSE IN ORDER, BUT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE REQUEST WILL RECEIVE FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION. QFL-AFFILIATED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS HAVE STAYED AWAY FROM WORK IN LARGE NUMBERS ON MOST MONTREAL AREA CONSTRUCTION SITES SINCE MAY 8, ALTHOUGH

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THE OLYMPIC SITE IS APPARENTLY THE ONLY MAJOR JOB NOW AT A

COMPLETE STANDSTILL. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS 10,000 CONSTRUCTION WORKERS REMAINED IDLE ON MAY 13 AND AT LEAST SAME NUMBER EXPECTED TO BE OFF ON MAY 14. THE QFL HAS CALLED A SPECIAL MEETING OF ITS 400 MEMBER EXECUTIVE COUNCIL FOR MAY 15 TO DISCUSS FURTHER STRATEGY. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THE QFL WAS CONSIDERING A GENERAL STRIKE, PRESIDENT LOUIS LABERGE SAID THE POSSIBILITY WAS NOT EXCLUDED. REPORTS INDICATE THAT CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AFFILIATED WITH THE RIVAL CONFEDERATION OF NATIONAL TRADE UNIONS CONTINUE TO WORK NORMALLY.

3. CONSTRUCTION ON THE OLYMPIC SITE IS, OF COURSE, A MATTER OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE. AS REPORTED IN OUR 0845 ANY FURTHER SIGNIFICANT DELAY COULD MEAN THAT THE FACILITIES WILL NOT BE READY FOR THE 1976 GAMES. IN MAY 13 RADIO INTERVIEW PREMIER ROBERT BOURASSA STATED HE IS READY TO SACRIFICE THE OLYMPICS IF NECESSARY TO PRESERVE SOCIAL ORDER IN THE PROVINCE, BUT HE LATER STRESSED HE FEELS SURE IT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY TO GO THAT EXTREME.

4. VIOLENCE AT THE U.S. CONTROLLED PRATT AND WHITNEY PLANT ON MAY 12, REPORTED IN 0845 HAS ONLY WORSENERED THE GENERAL CLIMATE OF THE LAST FEW DAYS. ALLEGED POLICE BRUTALITY ON THAT OCCASION AGAINST THE QFL-AFFILIATED UNITED AUTO WORKERS WHO OCCUPIED THE PRATT AND WHITNEY PLANT IS RECEIVING WIDE PRESS COVERAGE. UNDERSTANDABLY THIS HAS GIVEN LABERGE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAY THAT MOMENT OF TRUTH HAS ARRIVED FOR QUEBEC UNIONISM. IT IS REASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT THE INJURED WORKERS OF PRATT AND WHITNEY WILL BECOME THE SYMBOLS FOR LABOR'S RESISTANCE TO THE MEASURES WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO IMPOSE.
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